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LETTER DATED 4 JUNE 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instruction from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 3 June 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Eldar KOULIEV
Permanent Representative

99-16722 (E) 040699 040699

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Annex

[Original: Russian]

STATEMENT ISSUED ON 3 JUNE 1999 BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE AZERBAIJANI REPUBLIC

As is known, following the joint visit to China in the summer of 1998 by Mr. I. Sergeev, Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, and Mr. V. Sarkissian, Minister of Defence of Armenia, a contract was concluded for the delivery to Armenia of eight "Taifeng" missile systems made in China.

In its note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China dated 17 May 1999, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic stated its position on this issue, requesting clarifications from the Chinese party.

With respect to the reaction of a number of senior Armenian and Russian officials, particularly Mr. Sarkissian and Mr. Sergeev, the statements made by them on the issue on 20 May in Yerevan during a press conference on the outcome of the session of the Council of Ministers of Defence of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States were merely a vain attempt to conceal an obvious fact confirmed by the Chinese party.

In accordance with the instructions he had been given, on 1 June 1999, Mr. TamerLan Karaev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Azerbaijani Republic to China met with Mr. Wang Yinfan, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China.

At the meeting in question the Azerbaijani Republic stated its official position on the delivery by China of eight "Taifeng" missile systems to Armenia, and it was indicated that according to the information available to the Azerbaijani party the systems in question had already been deployed in the Azerbaijani region of Upper Karabakh, which is occupied by Armenian troops.

It was also stated that Azerbaijan welcomed the position taken by China, which as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council had consistently supported Azerbaijan during the consideration and adoption of Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan; attention was drawn to the fact that those resolutions contained a provision on the inadmissibility of the delivery of weapons in the area where the conflict was occurring. It was stressed, in particular, that the delivery by China to Armenia of "Taifeng" missile systems was incomprehensible to the Azerbaijani party. The delivery of the missile systems was a matter of particularly great concern to Azerbaijan in that the Azerbaijani people viewed China as a friendly State and as a country that was endeavouring to reconstitute its own territorial integrity.

It was indicated that Azerbaijan wished to obtain from the Chinese party clarifications concerning: the circumstances of the sale by China of weapons to Armenia; the relationship between the Chinese Government and the contract in

question; the possibility of the return to China of the "Taifeng" missiles; and the Chinese military instructors who taught the Armenian armed forces how to operate the systems. It was also indicated that Azerbaijan wished to have assurances that such incidents would not occur again in the future.

When stating the position of the Government of the People's Republic of China on the points raised by the Azerbaijani party, Mr. Wang Yinfan, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, indicated that China considered the relations between itself and Azerbaijan to be friendly and that the leadership of the People's Republic of China was well aware of the position of Azerbaijan, which supported China on the issue of "reunification of the motherland". It was stressed, in particular, that China attached great importance to its relations with Azerbaijan and spared no effort in developing them.

With respect to the delivery of "Taifeng" missile systems to Armenia, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China said that he viewed it as a regrettable incident; he indicated that the Chinese leadership entirely understood the concern to which that issue gave rise in Azerbaijan and had conducted a searching inquiry on the subject.

Mr. Wang Yinfan explained that only a small number of Chinese companies sold weapons on the international market and that their activities were strictly controlled by the State, although Chinese law did not require that each contract should be approved by the Government; that was why, according to the Deputy Minister, the Government of the People's Republic of China had been unaware that the sale had been concluded.

The Deputy Minister announced that the Government of the People's Republic of China wished to state that it took full responsibility for ensuring that such incidents would not occur again and that the Chinese Government would not permit the interests of certain companies to become an obstacle to the development of relations between China and Azerbaijan. It was indicated that all Chinese military experts had already left Armenia.

With regard to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Mr. Wang Yinfan said that China fully supported peaceful settlement of the problem and respect for the territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani Republic.

Lastly, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China once again expressed regret with respect to the unfortunate misunderstanding concerning the sale of weapons to Armenia, stressing that China would never take any action that might be harmful to Azerbaijan. He indicated that he had stated the official position of the Government of the People's Republic of China and that the Chinese party trusted that it could count on understanding on the part of the Government of the Azerbaijani Republic.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic welcomes the fact that it has received prompt clarification of the issues that were a matter of concern to the Azerbaijani party and trusts that the Government of the

People's Republic of China will find it possible to take the necessary measures to ensure the return to China of the weapons unlawfully delivered to Armenia, whose deployment has a negative impact on the process of settling the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as on the development of relations between Azerbaijan and China.

Baku, 3 June 1999